

NSC BRIEFING

DOCUMENT NO.

CLASSIFICATION

CLASS. CHANGED TO: TOP SECRET

NEXT REVIEW DATE:

AUTH: HR 702

DATE: 1-11-80

REVIEWER: [REDACTED]

ALGERIAN CRISIS

29 February 1956 25X1

- I. A crisis of major proportions is approaching with "frightening acceleration" in Algeria, according to US ConGen Clark.
- A. Rebel operations (which commenced 1 Nov '54 in isolated mountainous area of eastern Algeria--see map) have now left few sections of the country untouched. As measure of intensity, in Jan '56, rebels killed 211 persons (59 of them military).
- B. Rebel attacks thus far in '56 have been bolder, better conceived and on increasingly larger scale.
- C. French officials in Paris and Algiers anticipate major rebel action during March.
- D. Rebel strength now estimated at 20,000 (by French) to 40,000 (by moderate Algerians)--this is 4 to 8 times the estimate of 6 months ago.
- E. A few small-arms shipments being smuggled in, but majority of rebel weapons are captured from French.
- F. Past French claims of Communist involvement in rebel movement [REDACTED] now being reiterated, on basis "new proof". However, we have not been shown evidence.
1. French also speak of role being played by native ex-soldiers, captured and "indoctrinated" at Dien Bien Fu.
  2. However, French have made this claim specifically about

\*Army and State Department only one man--a rebel leader in neighboring Morocco. review(s) completed.

II. ConGen reports rebels have so harassed Algerian land communications that only reasonably safe means of travel is by air or sea.

- A. In past week, small but important seaport of Nemours (map), the only outlet for important mines in eastern Morocco and western Algeria, has been isolated except by sea.
- B. Small former pirate port of Collo (eastern Algeria), has been similarly isolated for several months.
- C. ConGen claims evidence that, at some strategic moment, rebels plan to surround city of Algiers, itself, (pop: over 1/4 million) and that action might include uprising within city.
  - 1. City's mayor, meanwhile, believes local police not equipped to handle even present situation.

III. ConGen further reports that European settlers--who rioted wildly on occasion Premier Mollet's visit (6 Feb)--fear France will abandon them.

- A. "Colons" are organizing for self-defense: if necessary, will defy French law.
- B. Talk has revived about forming European-supremacy regime on pattern South Africa.
- C. Several press accounts suggest Europeans attempting to confiscate military, police arms-stores.

IV. In striking nation-wide address (28 Feb) Premier Mollet issued sugar-coated ultimatum to Algerian Moslems.

- A. Demanded end to fighting and "acts of violence"; declared "arms must be laid down".
- B. Promised, inturn, that within three months of restoration

- C. Closed on stern note that Moslems rejection of appeal would force France "to mobilize all its resources in order to assure by all means the security of the population."
- V. On 29 Feb, Mollet asked National Assembly to grant "special powers" to Minister Lacoste in Algeria to carry out Government's program.
  - A. Two-pronged Government plan first envisions large-scale military reinforcement, for restoration of order.
  - B. Thereafter, plan calls for economic and social "progress", administrative "reform", aimed at bettering lot of Algerian Moslems.
- VI. Present military and security forces--now probably about 200,000 (G-2 conservatively estimated 166,000 army as of 31 Dec 55)--constantly losing ground to rebels.
  - A. Lacoste has asked for 50,000 reinforcements immediately, another 50,000 later.
  - B. French taking serious view of recent defections of native Algerian troops to rebels.
    - 1. Lacoste reportedly has also asked immediate replacement of 45,000 native Algerians by 35,000 from metropole.
  - C. Defense Ministry plans to regroup, re-train forces in Algeria, the better to combat rebels' hit-and-run operations.
    - 1. This would involve break-up of NATO-committed units transferred during past year to Algeria.
  - D. Ministry also desires to obtain more US-built helicopters.
    - 1. 25 US helicopters already in use: obtained for medical

evacuation purposes, they have proved effective for